

We have a great story to tell about a Person. It is questionable if we have been telling it sufficiently as a story. A story is the supreme example of a work of art, and to be told well it must have artistic unity. Such is the endeavour illustrated by this service. It may seem frivolous to some, in reality

its intention is most serious, and its working out entails spiritual strain.

There is little doubt that something is requiring to be done to make our services satisfying to every soul. The foregoing is suggested as a contribution to that end.

## The Power of the Cross.<sup>1</sup>

### ANCIENT CHRISTIAN ENCOMIA.

BY ADOLF DREISSMANN, D.THEOL. (MARBURG), D.D. (ABERDEEN, ST. ANDREWS, MANCHESTER), PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN.

'AND if thou wilt know, Beloved,  
The power of the Cross,  
And what are the words of praise  
Concerning the Cross,  
Hearken!

#### *The Cross is*

The foundation of the Church,  
The preaching of the apostles,  
The annunciation of the prophets,  
The glorying of the martyrs,  
The exercising of hermits,  
The sobriety of virgins,  
The joy of priests.

The majesty of kings,  
The safety of the world.

Victory over the devil,  
Monument of the defeat of demons,  
The casting down of temples,  
The overthrowing of altars,  
The vanishing away of the steam of sacrifice.

The stumbling-block of the Jews,  
The perdition of ungodly men,  
The judge of the unrighteous,  
The bridle of the rich,  
The casting down of the proud.

Light to them that sit in darkness,  
Law of them that are without law,  
Kindness of the barbarians,  
The liberty of bondmen,

The wisdom of the unlearned,  
The repentance of the licentious,  
The avenger of them that suffer wrong,  
The pillar of the righteous.

The shipmaster of them that sail,  
The haven of them that are tossed with  
tempest,  
The wall of them upon whom war is made,  
The way of them that have gone astray.

The relief of them that are afflicted,  
The wealth of the needy,  
The hope of the despairing.

The power of the powerless,  
The physician of the sick,  
The guide of the blind,  
The staff of the lame,  
The binding of the sick of the palsy,  
The cleansing of lepers.

The comfort of the poor,  
The bread of them that hunger,  
The fountain of them that thirst,  
The covering of the naked.

The keeper of children,  
The schoolmaster of children,  
The father of the fatherless,  
The succourer of widows,  
The head of men,  
The end of the aged,  
The hope of Christians,  
The resurrection of the dead.'

\*

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Lionel R. M. Strachan, M.A., Lecturer in German, University of Birmingham.

In Greek, Syriac, and Coptic texts of the ancient Church long series of such lines in praise of the Cross have been handed down. How widespread they were in the early Christian period is proved by the fact that a leaf inscribed with words of this kind was found among the first fragments of ancient Nubian Christian literature that were published in 1907.<sup>1</sup> From a Greek text that goes under the name of St. Chrysostom<sup>2</sup> I have translated the series given above, without adhering to the order of lines there extant; I have arranged the lines more according to their contents.

Besides whole series of such lines about the Cross, single examples of these words of praise (*encomia*) also occur in ancient Christian sermons and liturgies. The series no doubt arose only gradually as a mosaic composed of earlier single lines, put together to serve the practical needs of worship or, it may be, also of education. Sometimes such series will have been written side by side on parchment (perhaps with cruciform arrangement of the writing), in order to make a good amulet.

\*

The 'power' of the Cross has in this case certainly been conceived very rudely and clumsily. Originally, however, 'power' is a technical term in religious mysticism. St. Paul already, in his mysticism of the Passion, speaks of the 'power' of the resurrection and calls the Crucified Himself 'the power of God' (1 Co 1<sup>24</sup>). The 'power' of the Cross is the divine and redeeming efficacy radiating from the Cross conceived as present, that is to say, from the Crucified Himself.

We should not tone this down by saying that these lines are a 'hymn' concerning the 'meaning' of the Cross. That is expressing it too dogmatically. These *encomia* are much rather testimonies of practical piety expressing itself in set form of worship.

\*

'The Cross is . . .—such is the beginning of each encomium. In my translation I have printed this beginning only once at the head of all the lines; it is to be remembered, however, at the commencement of every line. 'The Cross is the way of them that have gone astray'—this manner

of expression, which may be called the form of identification, is peculiar to the language of worship already in the apostolic period. The language of dogma is not fond of identifying, but prefers to establish a causal relation: 'By the death of Christ on the Cross the ungodly are justified,' or (more in the style of modern psychology): 'He who allows the Cross of Christ to exert its influence upon him experiences the stimulus to moral conversion.' The language of worship dispenses with the circuitousness of causality; it says briefly, with the plastic vigour of a confession of faith and yet at the same time in popular tone: 'The Cross is the repentance . . .', 'the Cross is the staff, the bridle.'

On the other hand, the multiplication of identifications exhibits another characteristic of the language of worship. Dogmatic contemplation is fond of speaking in generalities: it likes to reduce the content of redemption to a few heavily freighted sentences. The language of worship reflects a soul immersing itself in the plenitude of effects experienced as parts of the process of redemption; hence it prefers to specialize and differentiate the mighty experience, without thereby endangering that concentration, peculiar to worship, which the pious soul brings to bear on the object worshipped—in fact, quite the contrary.

\*

These series of *encomia* on the Cross were written down in the period when ancient Christianity had become fully consolidated, but to a large extent use was made of much older material from the period of pre-dogmatic piety.

In an age in which the theologians, if they gave anything original at all, spoke generally a language different from that of the people, such lines as these about the Cross assured unhindered access to the simplicity and power of the most ancient Christianity. There are very old lines in these series. They still retain clearly their local colour and the colour of their time. Christianity a religion of the Mediterranean world, a fighting religion, a religion for fighters, a religion of charity (*caritas*), full of sympathy for the lowly and full of mistrust of the arrogant, but always concentrated on the Master and His Cross—such is the aspect of this religion, and everywhere the Biblical touches from the Psalter and New Testament are obvious (the 'kindness of the barbarians,' for instance, is from

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. Schäfer and K. Schmidt, *Die altnubischen christl. Handschriften der Kgl. Bibliothek zu Berlin*, Sitzungsberichte der Berl. Akad., 1907, pp. 602 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Migne, *Patrologia graeca*, vol. 50, p. 819.

Ac 28<sup>2</sup>). Taken all in all these encomia of the Cross are extraordinarily valuable evidences of the practical religion of ancient Christianity that remained indestructible beneath the surface of the theological religion of the thinkers.

\*

Do they not gleam with a special light, these ancient lines concerning the power of the Cross, now in the post-war Passion-tide? Many of them

are as if written for to-day. Over countless hosts of the weary and heavy laden, over the desolate and the maimed, over the hungry, starving, and despairing, the Crucified extends arms of blessing, gentle and kind, divinely compassionate. But the Crucified is also 'the head of men,' and mankind, torn by enmity, bitterness, and mistrust, will only then have peace when it recognizes that He is 'the safety of the world.'

## Literature.

### THE TOMB OF SENET.

THE Second Memoir of the Theban Tombs Series, edited by Mr. N. de Garis Davies and Dr. Alan H. Gardiner, has been issued. It is a detailed descriptive and pictorial representation of *The Tomb of Antefoker, Vizier of Sesostris I., and of his Wife, Senet* (Allen & Unwin; 42s. net). Of the description Dr. Gardiner writes one chapter; the rest is the work of Mr. Davies. Dr. Gardiner describes the Graffiti, that is to say, the scribblings made on Senet's Tomb (for the tomb is Senet's, not her husband's) by tourists. Those early tourists could not resist the temptation which assails tourists in all ages to leave some footprint on the sands of time. But the Egyptian tourist was more reverential than most tourists, more serious-minded certainly. 'The scribe Dhuty, justified, came to see this tomb of the time of Kheperkarē' (Sesostris I.). Thereupon he praised god greatly.' That is how one of them scribbles. Most of the Graffiti, Dr. Gardiner thinks, belong to the reign of Tuthmosis I. But one seems to be later, and it is especially interesting: 'The scribe Amenemhēt, son of the elder of the forecourt Dhutmōšē, born of [An]tef, came to see [this] tomb of the vizier Antefoker. It was pleasant in [his] heart . . . profitable for eternity. His name shall exist . . . offerings in it, say "an-offering-that-the-king-gives" to Osiris in front of [the westerners] . . . Rē', and the gods lords of the necropolis; *prt-hrw* offerings of bread and beer, oxen and geese, linen and cloth, incense and oil, all things good and pure which heaven gives and earth creates and Nile brings as his offering to the *ka* of Antefoker, justified.' That 'scribe Amenemhet'

Dr. Gardiner believes to be no other than the Amenemhet whose tomb was published as the first memoir of this series. Thus we possess his actual signature and a sufficient specimen of his handwriting. Amenemhet belongs to the reign of Tuthmosis III.

The chapters which Mr. de Garis Davies has written are in the simplest and severest style of scientific description. And so, at every turn, revelations of humanity occur which thrill the reader by their unexpectedness. One thing can never be hidden: it is the earnestness, the agonizing earnestness, of the human being to be right with God. Where did that hunger of heart come from? As the barge of the dead moves forward to the place of judgment, there is always the sacrifice of an animal. In the case of Senet's death-barge there is, however, a unique feature. A brace of geese are seen to leave the boat and fly forwards. 'It is not a mere artistic addition; it is a noted omen of good. The boat that put up a flight of birds as she passed down river had the best of auspices, especially if, as would generally happen, the birds took the same course as the boat itself, and thus became spirit-heralds to point its way, or were welcomed as the bird-souls of the deceased. A bird in the rigging is still a sailor's omen, and one may be seen perching on the masts in Tombs 40, 78, 90, and flying over them in Tomb 57.' And then comes the most pathetic fact of all. So intense is the desire for justification that sometimes the auspices are forced. The two birds are tied to the burial shrine to be let loose at the proper moment. They must be made to fly, and they must fly forward.

But all this is by way of introduction. The